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linking rule

rule determining the systematic association of the arguments of a predicate and the forms by which they are syntactically expressed.

Linking-Regel

Regel, die bestimmt, wie die Argumente eines Prädikats systematisch auf die Formen abgebildet werden, durch die sie syntaktisch realisiert sind.

Examples include the rules mentioned by *Löbner* (2002: 112) as being relevant to active sentences in English:

(i) An agent role always appears in subject position (as in [*The child*]*agent**opened* [*the door*]*theme*; example from *Löbner* 2002: 112).

(ii) A *theme* argument can only appear in subject position if no *agent* is present (as in [*The door*]*theme**opened*; example from *Löbner* 2002: 112).

From a constructionist point of view, semantic roles can only be linked to grammatical relations when the verb and its arguments are integrated or “fused” with the predicate and arguments of the construction. The ditransitive construction, for example, consists of the predicate *cause-receive* and the arguments *agent*, *recipient* and *theme*. The *cause-receive* predicate of the ditransitive construction may interact with verbs of different classes (e.g., verbs of giving, verbs of refusal, verbs of creation etc.). When it interacts with a verb like *give*, the role of the giver fuses with the *agent* role of the construction, the role of the entity receiving the transferred entity fuses with the *recipient* role, and the role of the entity given fuses with the *theme* role. When the verb and its own arguments are fused with the predicate and the arguments of the construction, the semantic roles of the fused arguments are linked to grammatical relations (in the case of the ditransitive construction to the subject and the first and second object) (cf. *Goldberg* 2006: 20-21).

Some regularities observed in connection with linking have been claimed to be relevant cross-linguistically. The rules in (i) and (ii) above, for example, are in fact part of a larger set of mappings claimed to be universal and innate (cf. *Pinker* 1989: 74):

(i) link the *agent* to Subject

(ii) link the *patient* to Object

(iii) link the *theme* argument (first argument of *be* or *go*) to Subject unless Subject is already linked; to Object otherwise

(iv) link the *goal* to oblique (Prepositional Phrase) argument

(v) link the *theme* argument in a *cause to have* predicate to the second object in a ditransitive construction

Goldberg argues that linking generalisations claimed to be language universals often turn out to be only tendencies. An example is the cross-linguistic tendency for the number of overtly

expressed complements to equal the number of semantic participants, the corresponding (putative) universal stating that "... noun phrase number lines up as simply as possible with argument number ..." (*Lidz/Gleitman/Gleitman* 2003: 154). *Goldberg* shows that many English constructions deviate from this tendency. This is true, for example, of the Semantic Incorporation Construction (as exemplified by *Pat buttered the toast* - 2 complements: *Pat, the toast*; 3 arguments: *Pat, the toast, the spread*). To explain the cross-linguistic linking generalisations observed, *Goldberg* (2006: 190) suggests a weaker, pragmatic generalisation stating that (i) the referents of linguistically expressed NPs are interpreted to be relevant to the message being conveyed and (ii) any semantic participants in the event being conveyed that are relevant and non-recoverable from context must be overtly indicated.

Literature

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